

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Atty. Maria M. Eliseeva, representative to applicant, on January 15, 2009.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 3, line 11, "the" (second occurrence) has been changed to –a--.

Line 12, "the" (first occurrence) has been changed to –a—

Line 13, "a" has been changed to –the—

Line 19, "a" has been changed to –the--.

Claims 1-4 are allowed.

Any inquiry concerning this communication should be directed to Virginia Manoharan at telephone number 571-272-1450.

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The problem addressed by the instant method and apparatus is to enhance the efficiency of especially pure krypton and xenon by maximizing their maximal recovery from a base mixture thereby eliminating the drawbacks of the known method and

apparatus, e.g., discontinuity associated with the use of a freezing apparatus being filled with xenon fractions at regular intervals, additional expenditures of a coolant and electric energy on the alternating freezing and heating of the xenon fractions, as well as the impossibility of obtaining especially pure krypton and xenon, when starting with the presence in a base mixture of, for example, fluorine/chlorine-containing compounds.

[See page 2, lines 16-3 through page 3, lines 1-13].

This problem is solved according to the invention in that a method and apparatus are provided wherein the xenon fraction flow before the delivery and separation in the production xenon column is further separated by rectification in a xenon rectifying column to form a purified xenon fraction flow, which is collected from an upper zone of a concentration part of the xenon rectifying column and fed for separation to the production xenon column, and a high-boiling admixtures flow. The krypton fraction flow, before the delivery and separation in the production krypton column is further separated by rectification in a krypton rectifying column to form a purified krypton fraction flow being supplied for separation to the production krypton column, and an intermediate admixtures flow. The blowing gases flow of the krypton column is further separated by rectification in a krypton recovery column to form a low-boiling admixtures flow and a recovered krypton flow. The recovered krypton flow and the blowing gases flow of the xenon column are directed for separation to the preliminary rectifying column and, more importantly, the rectifying columns are brought into operation with the krypton fed into the columns contact space, and reflux is formed in evaporating condensers of the rectifying columns. [See pages 3-5].

None of the prior art of record solve the problem addressed above by providing the method and apparatus as discussed supra. Thus, the subject matter of claims 1-4 is neither disclosed by the prior art nor is obvious. The claims are deemed allowable over the prior of record.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Virginia Manoharan whose telephone number is 571-272-1450.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Glenn Caldarola, can be reached on 571-272-1444.

The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1797